

**Sisters' Muffled Voice: A Feminist Reading of Edith Wharton's  
*Bunner Sisters* and Taha Husain's *The Call of The Curlew***

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DOI: <https://doi.org/10.31973/rmtz9d17>



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**Abstract:**

The present paper offers a comparative feminist reading of the American novelist Edith Wharton and the Egyptian novelist Taha Husain. It aims at analyzing both Wharton's *Bunner Sisters* (1916) and Husain's *The Call of The Curlew* (1934/1980) in terms of feminist criticism demonstrated in Beauvoir's theory of patriarchy in her book: *The Second Sex* (2010). The analysis of these novellas provokes three substantial points regarding the artistic achievement of both writers. First, patriarchy is a male programming intended to subdue and decentralize the female by treating them as a sexed being, or rather as an inessential other. Second, the inferior position of women inspires Wharton and Husain to incorporate Beauvoir's theory of patriarchy into their fictional works. To attain such an aim, both writers start narrative visions through which they expose patriarchal methods to marginalize and subordinate women. Lastly, the close reading of the novellas shows that they reflect the systemized oppression of women. Such is the shared leitmotif of Wharton and Husain's narrative.

**Keywords:** Wharton; Husain; patriarchy; segregation, sisters; curlew, hegemony.

## 1.Introduction:

The paper attempts a comparative feminist study of the Pulitzer Prize winning American novelist, short story writer, and designer Edith Wharton (1862-1937) and the most influential Egyptian man of letter, the dean of the Arabic literature Taha Husain (1889-1973). It aims at analyzing both Wharton's *Bunner Sisters* (1916) and Husain's *The Call of The Curlew* (1934/1980) in terms of feminist criticism demonstrated particularly in Beauvoir's theory of patriarchy in her book: *the Second Sex* (2010). The study affirms the idea that feminism is an interdisciplinary critical theory that "examines the ways in which literature...reinforces or undermines the economic, political, social, and psychological oppression of women." (Tyson, 2006, p.33).

The very objective of the study is to show that the submissiveness of women is the main motive in Wharton and Husain's novellas. In order to depict such a dominant awareness, i-e., how women suffer from the patriarchal hegemony, both writers create fictional images that bring into prominence the power structured relationship designed by the male to create an imbalance of power that subordinate the female. Even though a few studies have been made on the works of Wharton and of Husain, no current academic study has combined the narrative images of both writers in the light of feminism. The present paper conducts a comparative study of Wharton with that of Husain within a feminist context to define the ways used by each writer to expose the reasons behind the creation of patriarchy programing that has marginalized women since the beginning of human history.

To ensure their domination, males invent a patriarchal system in which females are but a "sexed being" or "an accidental being" responsible of all the evil in the history of human existence. (Beauvoir,2010, p.25). This is the very essence of patriarchy as the present study argues. Although Wharton and Husain belong to different cultures, a close reading of their novellas illustrates the social system through which patriarchy maltreats women or the sisters as the study illustrates, by forcing them to accept male supremacy over them. In another words, the very aim of such system is to upgrade man as a master, the supreme law and degrades woman as a slave, a subordinate being defined by the male authority. Such is the main idea that defines the thematic structure of Wharton's and Husain's artistic power.

To understand the feminist inclination of Wharton's and Husain's works, one should examine it through the lens of Simone de Beauvoir (1908- 1986). In her book *The Second Sex* (2010), the French novelist, philosopher, political activist, and feminist theorist provides a starting point for the second wave of feminism, and traces the cultural factors that participated in the rise of patriarchy, factors that include good principles participated in the creation of order, light and man and bad principles that created chaos, darkness and woman. (2010,p. 114). Simply because men are the makers of history and laws constitutions, they set up the codes of patriarchy that subordinate female position. Such codes legalize women's oppression and defilement. To illustrate that notion, Beauvoir cites two examples around which the theory of patriarchy is instituted: Eve and Pandora. Eve, created by God to be Adam's partner, is hold to be responsible for the sufferings of humanity when she urged Adam to eat the forbidden fruit. Pandora, on the other hand, the female mythic created by the pagan gods, is behind releasing evil that deform and distort humanity. According to the French feminist, these two female examples explain why women are associated with darkness, evil, and disorder, while men are associated with light, good, and order. Women are to subdue to patriarchal authority to clarify their original sin. (2010, p.114).

Beauvoir continues to explain the patriarchal concept that considers woman nothing but a passive other that ought to receive her subordination with a complete submissiveness. This very subordination implicates that man and woman are but different entities attain inconsistent relationship. Therefore, patriarchy ascends man as the positive aspect of humanity and descends woman as his inferior negative "incomplete part", or an accidental sex being stripped of any sense aside the male authority:

And she is nothing other than what man decides; she is thus called "the sex," meaning that the male sees her essentially as a sexed being; for him she is sex, so she is it in the absolute. She is determined and differentiated in relation to man, while he is not in relation to her; she is the inessential in front of the essential. He is the Subject; he is the Absolute. She is the Other. (2010, p.26).

## 2. Discussion

Beauvoir's motif of woman as the nonessential other is best translated in Wharton's *Bunner Sisters* and Husain's *The Call of The Curlew*. Both writers, in their attempt to portray the imbalanced relationship of man and woman, formulate a narrative vision that aims at working out of woman experience and taking woman's experience seriously. To unfold the negative ramification of the patriarchy on the psyche of women, they employ images that act as a ringing bell for the masculine mind to stop enslaving the feminine mentality.

*Bunner Sisters* was written in 1892 but published in 1916 after the breakout of the World War I. Such "timely" publication, according to Jin Li, demonstrates Wharton's commitment to the political sentiment of her time, particularly through, creating the Teutonic character of Herman Ramy. In these war times of the World War I, German were always the evil (2017,p.80-82), and in her narrative such evil is imposed on a lower class sisters. As Husain, Wharton creates women ready to accept reality as it is and dwelling not on evil, but rather on the effect it generates. Having attained a rich successful literary career and a notable social and political life, Wharton has never endowed her heroines with qualities like her own. Marilyn French suggests that every society is built on political, moral assumption and priorities. Groups that seem to represent devalued qualities will themselves be devalued as human beings. Members of such groups always speak and act as members of underclass. Since women are of the devalued groups, their acts and speech can never attain the authority of the legitimacy and are constantly approached by male establishments as the expression of an underclass.(1987,p.225-226).

In Wharton's *Bunner Sisters*, the eldest sister Ann Eliza and the youngest Evelina are two working class women who run a shop at a side street of Stuyvesant Square, New York. Although Wharton in her novella, as in Charlotte Bronte's *Jane Eyre* (1847), tries to refute the surface reality that connects women's psychological maturity and economic stability on their contact with men, and denounce their perpetual want for men as supportive companion more than men need women and although she plots the seemingly inevitable destruction of physically unattractive unfit female protagonist, she gives a more knotted reasons for these women's failure. It is a ruin that corresponds with Beauvoir's rereading of these characters:

Woman has always been, if not man's slave, at least his Vassal; the two sexes have never divided the world up equally; and still today, even though her condition is changing, woman is heavily handicapped. In no country is her legal status identical to man's, and often it puts her at a considerable disadvantage. Even when her rights are recognized abstractly, long-standing habit keeps them from being concretely manifested in customs...Refusing to be the Other, refusing complicity with man, would mean renouncing all the advantages an alliance with the superior caste confers on them... Indeed, besides every individual's claim to assert himself as subject – an ethical claim – lies the temptation to flee freedom and to make himself into a thing: it is a pernicious path because the individual, passive, alienated, and lost, is prey to a foreign will, cut off from his transcendence, robbed of all worth. (Beauvoir, 2010,p.29-30).

In the above extract, Beauvoir states that when woman's rights are recognized abstractly, long standing habit manifested in masculine power forces her to turn into a "thing" deprived of all worth. As a prey to foreign will, Bunner Sisters are obliged to be a thing or rather a shop and it is what Boyle considers as the text's enteral focus. The absence of the article 'the' from the title of the novella, that it is "*Bunner Sisters*" instead of "*The Bunner Sisters*" manipulates the referent from the sisters themselves to instead the shop in which they work. Sharing their last name with the title of their store intermingles the sisters' identities with that of their shop, causing them to participate in their own objectification and consumption (2015,p.204). Yet the shop is different from the surrounding environment. To enhance her notion of separating Bunner Sisters from the surrounding retail enterprises, Wharton regulates the shop through certain building design. The shop's frontage with a "display of artificial flowers... [and]white-washed walls in pleasant contrast to the adjoining dinginess."(1916, p.3) makes it a refuge from the surrounding depressing neighboring, and also attaches it and the sisters themselves, to a distant past that reflects the segregation of its inhabitants; who are turned into objects of the surrounding social change resulting from advances in modern life.

The same is true to the interior design of the shop. The inside walls and windows that are covered with a mixture of artificial flowers, note-papers, wire hat-frames, and limp garments from the dyers' (1916, p.3) set the shop to resemble a well-loved, yet an old fashioned neglected home. The items displayed at the window of the shop are all of an "undefinable greyish tinge of objects long preserved in the show case of a museum."(1916,p.3).The haggard wasted shop's

window is a translation of the sister's incompetence to cope with the modern department store – windows and hence the sister's failure to attract viewers of modern attractive windows' display. The presence of viewers according to Bennett is a “ representation of power required that there be an audience before whom such representation might display”(1995,p.23).To understand that, one needs to have a look at the bi- directional perspective Bunner Sisters' window offers. The shop window displays two separate scenes depending on the viewer's perspectives, and eventually two different messages. The first of these perspectives the shop window provides the industrial society viewers with is an opportunity to reflect on the pre-industrial past. This function turns Bunner Sisters into a reference point to understand the change that have already and will continue to happen. Of another perception, the sisters' view of the street offers an image of modernity they should replicate to master a degree of a power able to transfer ideas, values and practices (Boyle,2015,p.207). The distinction between Bunner Sisters' pre-industrial past or rather their unattractiveness plunders any chance of gaining suitable viewers or rather suitors. Further, it exposes them, as along preserved objects, to destruction exhibited in spinsterhood and renounces all the advantages an alliance with the superior caste confers on them.

In a room behind the shop, the sisters lead a domestic life. The room that serves as a kitchen, bedroom and reception room contains sewing and pink machine necessary to maintain their economic independence. McDowell considers the attempt of women in Wharton's fiction to become strong and independent never totally a success. In a hostile or indifferent society, women find no complete victory. For Wharton, a woman must exist as a conventionally feminine presence in order to be seen as a “new” woman. Efficiency and economic self-reliance are not the main characteristics of her heroines who attain a solid control of their lives and who influence others. (1974, p.524). Ann Eliza and Evelina's work help their independence, but it is a fragile infirm independence that serves as a manifesto of a low self- esteem measured through the few suitors (consumers) they happen to have. Wharton uses two different symbols to enhance that intimation. The first is the chromo “of a young lady in a night- gown who clung with eloquently-rolling eyes to a crag described in illuminated letters as the Rock of Ages.”(1916,p.3). Having the chromo hanged over their bed resembles their inner sexual desire hindered by the late nineteenth century false religious and cultural mores. The second symbol used is their long - treasured volume of Longfellow's poetry that their father had as a school prize.

When Herman reads “Maidenhood” from Longfellow, Evelina lowers her eyes to indicate the shy maiden the poem talks about. Both symbols demonstrate the sisters’ vulnerability in the market of production and consumption, and correspondingly in the business of marriage and motherhood, something that paves the way to Herman’s abuse.

The story that their neighbor Miss. Mellins tells them about her cousin Emma, who by underestimating her instincts against marrying a man took to drink, and brings her own ruin, functions as an announcement of Evelina’s ruin and death. Evelina’s ruin is caused not merely because of her vulnerability, but also because of her sister’s passivity, a passivity that arises from Ann Eliza’s presumption that Evelina’s marriage to Herman is her only left chance to fortify her status in the business of objectification and consumption; i.e., to be a wife and a mother and change her being as along conserved object.

With the first encounter with Ramy Herman, the German immigrant and owner of clock repair shop, it is Ann Eliza who is first attracted to him, yet her immediate fascination is interrupted by that of Evelina’s to him. Following her own desire Evelina, unlike Ann Eliza, manages to initiate a social relationship with Herman. Thus, Ann Eliza abandons any further inner inclinations to have Herman for herself. When Evelina urges her to know the reasons behind his not visiting them for several days, Anne Eliza ventures to go to his shop to find him:

Sitting behind the counter in an attitude of strange dejection...For a moment she thought he did not know her...and the sound of her voice seemed to recall his wandering senses... his face was the color of yellow ashes...He continued to look at her with dull eyes... [and] He spoke in a slow labored way, as if he had difficulty in getting his words together. (Wharton,1916, p. 26).

Due to her depressed statues of losing the last chance to get him for herself, Ann Eliza is unable to detect him as an opium addict. Though she suspects that his suffers exceeds natural diseases, she resorts to silence. Since hegemony is created and contained through silence (Awwad, 2001,p.41), Ann Eliza presents not only herself but her sister to Herman as a target of victimization and oppression. This idol of evil flatters Evelina but proposes to Ann Eliza: “I always liked de quiet style- no fuss and air, and not afraid of work... [who] do most of the work here.”(Wharton,1916,p.33). Herman takes her as a prey that would appreciate anyone marries her and presumes that to be married, she is ready to provide the financial support to her partner. Still, Ann Eliza insists that it is Evelina whom Herman should marry:

“ I always thought it was Evelina- always. And so did everyone else.” (Wharton, 1916,p. 33).Insisting on marrying her sister, Ann Eliza empowers Herman segregation over the two, with no fear of any possible resistance. After the actual proposal to Evelina takes place, the elder sister can see that he is no more than a cheater working the marriage to his own benefit. Soon he attempts to extort as much money as he could by asking to liquidate their savings. Fearing to present herself as a jealous rival to what everyone seems to be Herman’s free choice; her younger sister, Ann Eliza resorts to what Kornasky considers a “policy of silence”. At this stage, her silence saves her from the unpleasant fact that the only marriage proposal she and her sister have ever received is an exploitative poly. Likewise, she keeps silent to allow her sister marry a man she thinks she has selected forgetting that such a misguided attempt ties her younger sister to a man she would not have chosen has she known that her elder sister is his first choice. Evelina is robbed of her capacity to decide whether he is worthy by Ann Eliza's concealment of crucial information. Further, Ann Eliza does not satisfy herself either and thus falls into a devastating despair. She finds that her feminine self-sacrifice in offering Herman to Evelina provides no moral compensations for loss of income and companionship. After Evelina leaves with Herman, Ann Eliza is miserable, filled with "a trembling sense of insufficiency" to survive loneliness and to keep the spirit required to run her shop. Even when Evelina returns to her sister after Herman's desertion, the sisters' final inability to transcend conventions of feminine behavior ruins any chance of their mutual financial and emotional recovery. Ann Eliza can neither comprehend the facts of Herman's mistreatment of Evelina nor accept Evelina's conversion to Roman Catholicism while in the hospital following her child's death. Like Ann Eliza, Evelina presumes that the two cannot sympathize with each other and their lack of empathy becomes their ultimate deathblow. Evelina refuses to struggle for her health and Ann Eliza refuses to abide the embarrassment of sending Evelina to a charity hospital, though the strain of nursing her must lead to the loss of the Bunner sisters' business.(1995,p.53-55). A loss maintained through submissiveness and consent.

*The Call of the Curlew* (1934) is Taha Husain's third novel that has two Bedouin sisters as his main characters. Similar to the spirit of his age, Husain presents his woman characters in a reserved manner ready to accept reality as it is. The two sisters in his story, the eldest Hanadi and the youngest Amina, are obedient to their mother despite their sometimes distaste of her decisions. Marilyn French asserts that when critics write about male protagonists, they assume that they are worthy of interest, their flaws are of interest and the reader expect a rapidly correction of such flaws. Rarely does one find a critic dismissing or condemning a male character because a male character is what he is and what he is has a meaning within the context of the work. (1987,p.226).With this notion and with the willingness not to dwell on evil , but on the effect it produces, the two sisters and their mother finds themselves obliged to leave their village because their father has brought some kind of disgrace by his death and no further details are given of the that very evil. The three women find work in one of the Nile Delta cities, all in different houses. Amina becomes a companion for the kind hearted Khadija; a girl about her age yet with a better life and education. In bitter silence Amina describes he attendance as follows:

I was the most fortunate and happiest of the three of us: fate had favoured me in placing me to serve in the house of the *Ma'mur* (sub-perfect) of the district. At first my service seemed odd and painful to me; but soon I began to like it and to find pleasure and interest in it. I was set to be with one of the *Ma'mur*'s daughters; she was about my age, or perhaps a little older than I. I was to be with her in her play, but not play with her; to accompany her to the *kuttab*, but not learn with her; to be present with her when he private tutor come before sunset, but not to follow her lessons. For her I was merely a servant who would keep an eye on her from a distance and anticipates her wants but not take any part in what she did. (Husain,1934/1980.p.10).

Hanadi, the elder sister, serves a young engineer who lives alone in a house near that where Amina works. Everything goes so well, until one day of their weakly gathering at their small room, which is their place at the city, Amina finds Hanadi and her mother in a gloomy silence. Whatever happened to Hanadi at the engineer's house is left vaguely unclear. Though horrified, both sisters obediently follow the mother's decision to leave the city. It is only when they spend the night at the Umda's home that Amina knows what has happened to Hanadi at her late master house and the reason behind their flight. The elder sister, under the call of the Curlew, unfolds Amina the whole story and warns her about letting it happen to her. The mother's

brother, Nasir arrives and the next day he loads up the camels to set out for home. Under the shadow of darkness and the call of the Curlew, he cleans the family honor by killing Hanadi with the agreement of the cruel mother who sets in silent cries that reflect her submissiveness and her weakness in front of her community's more. "The whole atmosphere is filled with painful silence, the silence of death." (Husain, 1934/1980.p.52). Marilyn French acclaims that female characters are never approached the way critics approach male characters, unvirtuous female characters are simply dismissed on the ground of their depravity, corruption, foolishness and malice (1987,226).

Having Hanadi killed at the hand of her uncle involves the concept of family honor. Family is the foundation of Middle Eastern society that tends to be patriarchal in orientation. The status of the family is linked to its honor, which is the responsibilities of the female; daughters and wives, to maintain. Hence, Honor killing could be defined as a gender based act of violence; usually a murder committed by a male family member commonly a father or a brother against a female family member believed to have brought shame to the family by involving in immoral sexual behavior. Having a family honor tarnished, 'losing face' is the main motive behind honor killing. (Awwad,2001,p.39).

Awwad presumes that hegemony is a system of thoughts developed overtime and tends to reflect the interest of certain classes usually the "Intellectual Elites" to the "uneducated masses". These thoughts become part of the social control apparatus. Hence, Hegemony is created and maintained through consent and silence. (2001,p.41). In that perspective, Nasir's hegemony over Hanadi is maintained through her mother's consent. To maintain authority, Eastern patriarchy creates certain realities reflected through shame, family honor and honor killing strengthened through the femininity's inferiority. Out of masculinity perception, femininity as an ascribed position disempowers women of any choices but to accept realities as they are and deprives them of any freedom in a patriarchal culture of the Middle East. Moreover, according to Jaraysal, crimes committed in the name of family honor perpetuate women's subordination to men by forcing them to live their lives in fear. All rights are compromised when death is the feared penalty. (2011,p.162).

Witnessing Hanadi's murder at the hand of her uncle, Amina alone flees back to the city to her beloved Khadija accompanied by her visual and oral hallucination of the fountains of blood coming out of her sister and by the call of the curlew. The employment of the curlew at this point of the narrative reflects the author's artistic power to expose the negative consequences of patriarchy on the existence of Hanadi. Husain uses the call of the curlew at the very moment of her death to say that even Hanadi is dead, her subordination will never fade away because of the massive ordeal of the murder. The act of honor killing, itself, illustrates the domination of men over women. This is best understood through Beauvoir's concept of "master- slave relation"(2010,p.29). While the uncle is the master, Hanadi is the slave who suffers from the massive power of the uncle. This power forces her to be turned into a "thing" (2010,p.30),or rather a curlew. In spite of the uncle's oppression that subdues Hanadi into a passive silence, the call of the singing curlew becomes her muffled cries that speak up her painful experience in a male orientated culture. It is a call for all women, including her sister, to resist their inferior position as the male submissive unessential other. It is, also, the author's attempt to disempower the position of man that not only dehumanize woman but rather defiles it.

One of the secrets of *the Call of the Curlew* lies in the author's remarkable ability to tell his story effectively. Descriptions of characters are rarely of physical appearance, but for more vividly of their inner being and the creation they provoke in another (Nolin,1973,p. 15). In Amina's picturing of her first encounter with her uncle's brutality, she says "I saw how he announced my father's death to my mother, and how rude he was to her and us, forgetting that she was only a widow and that we were orphans; he was solely preoccupied with the family, the rumours which might spread and the shame which his death would cause us."(Husain, 1934/1980,p. 39), a brutality enhanced even more when he kills Hanadi: " uncle, like a devil, stands before us."(1934/1980,p.52).

Amina's dreadful time of delirium in her uncle's home are painted with the vibrant credible word picture , particularly When Amina describes Hanadi's silent figure that keeps haunting her: "Do I not see in this shadow the very features of my sister? Why then does she not speak to me? Why does she not call me?...Her image in the flowing blood? Why does she not speak to me?" ( 1934/1980,p.55). At this stage of the story, Hanadi is not the only silent figure, when she struggles to be conscious after the death of her sister; Amina wants to scream at the fountain of blood that flows from her sister, but she

cannot. Her voice would bring the women of the house and above all would bring her mother whom now she cannot stand her being around. Ironically, it is the call of the curlew that speaks for her and her sister and reminds her to avenge the death of her sister from the man who has caused the tragedy.

At Khadija's house, Amina depicts another picture of silence. It is when Amina knows that an engagement is arranged between Khadija and the engineer. To Amina, the arranged marriage is the engineer's attempt to regularize his betrayal to Hanadi, in the name of religion, customs and law. The girl that will replace Hanadi in the young engineer's heart, in his house and life is no more than Khadija who has been consoling Amina for the evil that has been done, for the misfortune with which she is impaired. That is enough to bring out Amina's violent revolt, assumingly for the protection of Khadija from a great evil, for keeping her from a terrible danger and delivering her from the wolf's mouth. It is time where Taha Husain gives a heard voice to the heroine, who is moved by her jealousy more than loyalty to stop the arranged marriage:

If I had searched deep into my heart and delved into my conscious, I would have discovered a terrible evil, witnessed a horrible thing, and known that I was not faithful to my sister or my friend, but that I hoped for the best and worst for myself, because I wanted this ardent flame for myself alone so that no one else could be burned by it. (Husain, 1934 /1980.p. 84-85).

Unlike Ann Eliza, Amina does not resort to her feminine self-sacrifice in offering the engineer to Khadija. Betraying Khadija is not as agonizing as leading a life of silence where thoughts and actions do not compile: "It would have sufficed for one of these misfortunes and worries to have prevented me from living, to forbid , and with every reason, a calm existence; what can I say therefore of a multiple life, full of lies, nurtured with hypocrisy." (Husain, 1934/1980.p. 86).After The engagement is broken, Khadija and her family leave to another city , the second episode of the story between Amina and her new master; the young engineer, starts. The episode marks the multiple lives of lies and hypocrisy imposed by submissiveness to cultural rules, yet this time directed to a different aim. Occupied by her thoughts of revenge, in contrast to Ann Eliza, Amina proves to be uneasy prey, and her relationship proves to be "difficult although it was easy, complicated though it was simple, and tense though it was gentle." (Husain, 1934 /1980.p. 114).She enjoys torturing the man who has caused the death of her sister, and who now looks at her "with long, lingering gazes which completely divest a woman of her

clothing.” (Husain, 1934 /1980, p. 111). His stare asserts that men interact with women as a sexual object that ought to satisfy the desires of her master by being a slave to patriarchal schema. But Amina chooses to fight the young engineer in a battle of will, defeats him and gains her great victory “I had... met him on the battlefield of his own choice” (Husain, 1934/1980,p. 112). It is a long battle of attending his needs and hindering any further approaches. She never yields to his filthy demands that “could destroy a man’s manhood, making him seem strong as a lion, yet weak as a mouse, respected like a lord and humiliated like a slave.” (Husain, 1934 /1980 ,p. 114). Finally, they both emerge of the fight mature and changed. He stops his filthy demands, and she is no longer haunted by the vision of her dead sister. A truce is made between them when they converse equal to each other. The novel ends happily, yet the movie version of the book appears with a changed ending. Nasir, her uncle, appears and kills the young engineers on his try to kill Amina to save the family’s honor, a story more applicable to the reality of the Middle East. Both the movie and the book end with calling of the curlew to stand for the inner calling of the sisters: “The call of the Curlew! Do you think that its song echoed like that When Hanadi fell into infinite solitude?” (Husain, 1934/1980,p. 130).

### 3. Conclusion

Having examined Wharton's *Bunner Sisters* and Husain's *The Call of The Curlew* in the light of Beauvoir's theory of patriarchy, the following could be concluded: firstly, patriarchy is the power-structured connection originated by the male to control the female, which in turn leads to the male programming that views woman as a sexed being and unessential other. It observes women as a thing connected with chaos and darkness, while men are always seen related to order and light. Relating women to the negative aspects of human culture stimulates Wharton and Husain to resist the patriarchal agenda which nourishes the male hegemony and female submission.

Secondly, a close reading of Wharton's *Bunner Sisters* and Husain's *The Call of The Curlew* reveals that though the two writers come from different cultural environments, they are identical in embodying Beauvoir's theory of patriarchy in their fiction. Such embodiment enables them to construct a narrative strategy that portrays patriarchy's segregation of women and urges them to believe themselves as an insignificant other. Conversely, each adopts a different fictional vision. Wharton devices an image of unattractive women that announces them unfit in the business market of objectification and consumption. Husain employs the call of the curlew as a feminist mechanism to stand the male's segregation.

Finally, comparing Wharton's *Bunner Sisters* with Husain's *The Call of The Curlew*, one can deduce that the two novellas revolve around the systemized oppression of women. In Wharton's novella, the story discusses the devalued qualities of the two sisters that turn them into devalued human beings and an expression of underclass that should surrender to the male power. In *Bunner Sisters*, Ann Eliza's submission and silence leads to her destruction and that of her sister, Evelina at the hand of Herman.

Similarly, the patriarchal power of man, resembled in the character of Hanadi and Amina's uncle Nasir, forces the two sisters to think of the existence of a curlew. Despite the male oppression imposed, and despite the two sisters' submission to that oppression, the call of the curlew projects a feminist voice that prefers silence to resistance. This indicates that Wharton and Husain operate the tragedy befalls on the sisters in the two stories with a view to unveil the oppression inflicted on women's existence.

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صوت الأخوات المكتوم: قراءة نسوية لرواية اديث وارتن الاخوات بنر ورواية طه  
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### خلاصة البحث

تستعرض الورقة البحثية الراهنة قراءة نسوية مقارنة للكاتبة الأمريكية اديث وارتن وعميد الادب العربي طه حسين حيث تقدم الدراسة تحليلاً لكل من رواية وارتن الاخوات بنر (1916) ورواية طه حسين دعاء الكروان (1934) وفقاً لنظرية سيمون دي بوفوار النسوية وكما جاءت في كتابها الموسوم الجنس الآخر (2010) ويبين تحليل الروائيتين ثلاث نقاط مهمة تخص الانجاز الادبي الفني لكلا الكاتبتين. اولهما ان السلطة الذكورية ماهي الا نظام أنشأه الرجل لتشيتت المرأة واخضاعها لرغباته الحسية باعتبارها كائن حسي او كيان "آخر" مهمش وتعد النظرة الدونية للمرأة هو الامر الثاني الذي دفع كل من اديث وارتن وطه حسين لأعتماد نظرية بوفوار النسوية في اعمالهم السردية من خلال صور سردية تقتنص الوسائل التي يتبعها المجتمع الذكوري لتهميش المرأة واخضاعها لرغباته واخيراً فأن القراءة المعقدة لروايات الكاتبتين تستعرض القمع الذي تعانيه المرأة في المجتمع الغربي والعربي على حد سواء.

الكلمات المفتاحية: وارتن، حسين، السلطة الذكورية، التفرقة، الاخوات، الكروان، الهيمنة.